

Analyzing the Politics of Development Funding, Competition, and Corruption in the Ch'orti'
Maya Area

by

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Anthropology and the Graduate Faculty of the
University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Date Defended: June 13th, 2016

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Date Defended: June 14th. 2016

ABSTRACT

My thesis is a study of the obstacles that prevent development practitioners from prioritizing beneficiaries' needs when implementing development projects in the Ch'orti' Maya area. Historically, structural dynamics have prevented the Ch'orti' population from meeting their basic needs. While working in the region for six months in 2011 and 2012, I discovered that such structures remain despite efforts of local development agencies to promote a better quality of life through project implementation. Throughout eight weeks of ethnographic fieldwork in the summer of 2015, I interviewed ten local development practitioners and seven local experts, and I found that local development agencies in the Ch'orti' area are constantly adapting to funding fluctuation. In efforts to continue to receive funding, development practitioners engage in a series of strategies that deprioritize beneficiaries' needs. In addition, competition for funding and beneficiaries polarizes local development agencies, and prevents them from collaborating with each other or coordinating efforts. What is worse, resources development practitioners have at their disposal are sometimes contingent upon politicians or donors benefitting from interventions. Thus, development projects have treated the symptoms but not the causes of food scarcity and malnutrition in the Ch'orti' Maya area. My analysis suggests that, beyond determining which agency will implement which project, donors foster the emergence of service economies when funding is abundant, and they foster competition when funding decreases.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

People in the Ch'orti' area have taught me a lot about life and anthropology! Thank you to all the local development workers who participated in this research and for making time in your busy agendas to talk to me. Special thanks to Horacio and Silvia, who also shared with me their private time and made my fieldwork so much more enjoyable! I admire your efforts to train social researchers at CUNORI.

Thank you to my advisor, Brent Metz, for the recommendations and support. Your patience and advice have made school a great learning experience. My committee members, Drs. Allan Hanson and Melissa Birch, have always been helpful and approachable; thank you! My fieldwork was funded by the Tinker Foundation, administered by the Center of Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the University of Kansas. I received additional funding from the Department of Anthropology at the University of Kansas to travel to the 2015 AAA meetings to present preliminary research findings and get feedback.

My previous experiences in the Ch'orti' Maya area greatly shaped this investigation, too. I thank the people who have helped me through my learning process since 2011: Alejandro Cerón, Angelina Raymundo, Lesly Ramírez, and Jennifer Casolo. Finally, thanks to my friends in Lawrence for all the support and encouragement.

Mom and Dad, I dedicate my efforts in Lawrence to your great teaching!

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SCARCE FOOD, ABUNDANT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

My thesis is a study of the obstacles that prevent development practitioners from prioritizing beneficiaries' needs when implementing development projects in the Ch'orti' Maya area. The topic is inspired by a contradiction I discovered while working in the region for six months in 2011 and 2012: that the benefits of myriad development projects accompany food scarcity, lack of resources, and unmet basic needs. That is, challenges to Ch'orti' subsistence remain despite efforts of local development agencies to promote a better quality of life through project implementation.

Historically, discrimination, inequalities, and lack of access to resources have prevented the Ch'orti' population from meeting their basic needs. Most households in the region survive on a day-to-day basis and only barely get by. With no access to drinkable water and a diet of only tortillas and beans three times a day, Ch'orti' households are periodically exposed to chronic food shortages that increase cases of premature death of preventable causes in the region. Children continuously experience episodes of severe diarrhea and dehydration, and adults often share personal stories of abandonment, loss, and misfortune. Beyond experiencing preventable premature death and social suffering, Ch'orti' people are sometimes blamed for their inability to feed themselves. Indeed, doctors and nurses sometimes accuse parents of neglect when they are unable to feed their children.

During my first visits to the Ch'orti' Maya area, I found it paradoxical that food scarcity, lack resources, and unmet basic needs were surrounded by abundant development symbols, objects, and activities. All the households I visited were beneficiaries of multiple development interventions. The roof top of their houses, the latrine, the sink, the stove, the metal silos, clothes, school supplies, and farm animals had been donated by development agencies in efforts to

promote a better quality of life. The parents I met would routinely participate in a variety of workshops and community assemblies organized by development agencies, and many children were sponsored by an international agency such as World Vision and Save the Children. What is more, multiple billboard posts advertised the work of particular development agencies in both paved and unpaved roads, sometimes including references to specific projects implemented in the area (see Figure 1). Although it is easy to find a variety of offices and cars belonging to development agencies when traveling through the region, development projects do not seem to impact beneficiaries' historical vulnerability to discrimination, inequalities, and lack of access to resources.

Figure 1: Billboard Posts Advertising the Work of Local NGOs at the Entrance to Jocotán.



Pictures: Silvia Sánchez Díaz (June 2015).

My thesis explores development projects' inability to impact historical discrimination, inequalities, and lack of access to resources. Throughout eight weeks of ethnographic fieldwork within the local development network, I found that development practitioners encounter a variety of obstacles that prevent them from prioritizing beneficiaries' needs. On the one hand, funding fluctuation inhibits long-term planning and collaboration among local agencies. On the other hand, donors and local politicians ensure a portion of development funding benefits them before

practitioners get to implement projects. Although decades of experience have taught local development practitioners that beneficiaries need more holistic, long-term interventions, funding fluctuation does not allow projects to seek structural changes. In addition, competition for funding and beneficiaries among development agencies has prevented coordination and collaboration. Thus, development projects have become attempts to create ‘easy ways out of poverty’. On the other hand, development practitioners have witnessed cases of politicians using development funding for seeking political support, and donors establishing spending requirements that benefit industries connected to them. Local development practitioners describe such practices as cases of ‘slicing development resources like a cake’. In short, institutional needs, competition among agencies, and political aims create incentives for development practitioners to deprioritize beneficiaries’ needs when implementing projects. Thus, projects have treated the symptoms, but not the causes of food scarcity and malnutrition in the region.

In this chapter, I analyze food scarcity in the Ch’orti’ Maya area as a form of structural violence. In the second chapter, I recount two waves of project proliferation in the region. In the third chapter, I describe the theoretical framework ethnographies of aid offer for analyzing development interventions, and I describe my methodology. In the third chapter, I explain how funding fluctuation inhibits long-term planning and collaboration among local agencies. In the fourth chapter, I describe how donors and local politicians sometimes ensure a portion of development funding benefits them before practitioners get to implement projects. In the fifth chapter, I discuss the challenges that emerge due to issues in funding allocation, and I mention some implications for the literature.

Food Scarcity and Malnutrition as Forms of Structural Violence

Ch'orti' people have suffered the impossibility of providing basic needs and a permanent state of deprivation since time immemorial – Oficina de los Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (Office for the Human Rights from the Archbishop in Guatemala), 2009.

...if people are starving when this is objectively avoidable, then violence is committed, regardless of whether there is a clear subject-action-object relation – Galtung 1969, 171.

Although structural violence is not the topic of my research, recognizing that Ch'orti' people suffer structural violence was a relevant step toward better understanding the context in which development practitioners work. Because Ch'orti' people suffer structural violence, promoting a better quality of life unavoidably requires challenging the inequalities that shape food scarcity and malnutrition in the region. In other words, even though Ch'orti' families often benefit from development projects, the inequalities that shape food scarcity in the region persist and Ch'orti' people continue to suffer disproportionately from malnutrition.

Indirect or structural violence occurs when unequal power produces unequal life chances. In other words, beyond physical harm, violence occurs when policies and social arrangements result in particular suffering and injuries – in this case, malnutrition – and the consequences of violence cannot be traced back to concrete perpetrators (Galtung 1969). As mentioned earlier, Ch'orti' people disproportionately suffer malnutrition because discrimination, inequalities, and lack of access to resources prevent them from meeting their basic needs. Beyond experiencing social suffering through abandonment, loss, and misfortune, Ch'orti' people are sometimes blamed for their inability to feed themselves. Ch'orti' people suffer structural violence because they have no power to decide over the distribution of resources, and are yet held accountable for the results of inequality.

Medical anthropologist Paul Farmer (2004) recognized the production of poor health and premature death through historically given, economically driven processes that constrain individual agency. As many epidemics in the world, malnutrition and chronic food shortages have periodically increased cases of premature death of preventable causes. In this section, I explain the national and regional inequalities that explain labor exploitation and state neglect in the Ch'orti' area. Then, I describe the effects of structural violence in the Ch'orti' region: periodic chronic food shortages, premature death of preventable causes, and sacrifices in Ch'orti' autonomy and cultural integration.

In Guatemala, the government has failed to provide for the wellbeing of the indigenous populations because a small elite formed of twenty-two families has historically controlled the resources and priorities of state. The Guatemalan oligarchy controls agriculture, industry, and commerce, and has a heavy hand in molding national ideology. As Metz (2006, 185) mentions, three of four of Guatemala's past presidents –León Carpio, Arzú, and Berger– belong to such elites. Among the Guatemalan oligarchy, contradictory but complementary claims of both laziness and physical endurance have justified labor exploitation. In her study about

Among the Guatemalan oligarchy, contradictory but complementary claims of both laziness and physical endurance have justified labor exploitation for centuries. Although stereotypes of laziness and physical endurance seem incompatible with one another, they both justify labor exploitation of indigenous peoples. Because the Guatemalan oligarchy has historically influenced the government, enforcing labor laws has not been a priority in Guatemala (Casaús 1995). The lack of political will to implement policies that benefit or protect indigenous peoples stems from a lack of representation of indigenous peoples in Guatemalan congress, unequal land distribution, low taxes on wealth, and underfunding education, healthcare, and law

enforcement (Pásara 2001). In short, indigenous peoples in Guatemala have historically suffered exclusion from the national economy, political participation, and access to resources for making a living.

At the regional level, inequalities between Ladinos (people of the town) and indigenous peoples (people of the *aldeas*, or mountain hamlets) further explain how Ch'orti' people suffer structural violence. First, people living in town have immediate access to more services, such as healthcare facilities, middle schools and high schools, better roads, stores, governmental offices, etc. Most *aldeas* have elementary schools, but not necessarily middle schools and much less high schools, and lack of good roads isolates them from the regional economy and inhibits political participation. Beyond spatial separation, much discrimination is directed against “Indian”-looking campesinos, where Ladino attitudes towards Ch'orti' people range from sympathy to paternalism to derision (Metz 2006). For instance, Ladinos disrespectfully ignore indigenous campesinos in the public sphere. What is more, some Ladinos do not want their children sharing schooling and health facilities with Ch'orti' people, and others take advantage of Ch'orti' people by overcharging them for services. In short, Ladinos nurture and take advantage of Ch'orti' vulnerability, which ultimately leads to Ch'orti' people suffering malnutrition, poorer health and healthcare, and shortened lives.

Neoliberal decentralization was touted as one way for governments to better attend to local populations, but due to a regional culture of discrimination and corruption, locally elected officials have served themselves with the influx of money, not their neediest constituents. Before decentralization, the main source of municipal funding was selling or renting former indigenous community land that had been officially declared municipal land in 1871 (Dary, Elías and Reyna 1998). Since decentralization, it is a cliché in local politics that candidates promise everything,

like roads, bridges, water systems, and schools, but do nothing once they are in office except embezzle the 11% of the national budget given directly to municipios (equivalent to small U.S. counties) (Metz 2006). Mayors are also notorious for taking credit for the results of non-municipal development projects, such as those of the National Peace Fund (FONAPAZ), or just flat misappropriating external project funds for their election campaigns (Metz 2008). When locally elected officials use public or development resources for personal benefit, they perpetuate structural violence against Ch'orti' people in the region.

Another way national and regional discrimination directly affects Ch'orti' people is through labor exploitation. In Guatemala, a variety of laws legitimized labor exploitation of indigenous peoples during colonial times and the period of Liberal Reforms (1871-1944). The last of the Liberal dictators, General Jorge Ubico, established policies of forced labor for impoverished people, particularly indigenous people¹ (Metz 2006). Although a new, protective Labor Code was passed in 1947 after a democratic revolution in Guatemala, lack of enforcement after the return of oligarchy in 1954 has been the norm. In turn, global competition in export-oriented industries has driven wages further down since the 1990s. When I visited the Ch'orti' area in 2011, I met a twelve-year old who had worked at a coffee plantation for two weeks and returned home with the equivalent of \$30. Although \$30 are much less than the salary a worker should legally receive in Guatemala for working in agriculture for two weeks, children earning \$30 in two weeks greatly contribute to the household survival. As Scott (1976) found in Southeast Asia, when households must feed themselves from small plots in overpopulated

¹ *La violencia, or las ruinas*, began in the 1930s when dictator Jorge Ubico implemented policies that forced indigenous peoples to work without pay in dangerous road construction projects, and established a network of officials, military commissioners, and spies that penetrated communities (Metz, Mariano and López García 2010).

regions, they will work unimaginably hard and long for the smallest increments in production – and for the lowest wages. Food scarcity is the handmaiden of exploitation and miserable employment conditions.

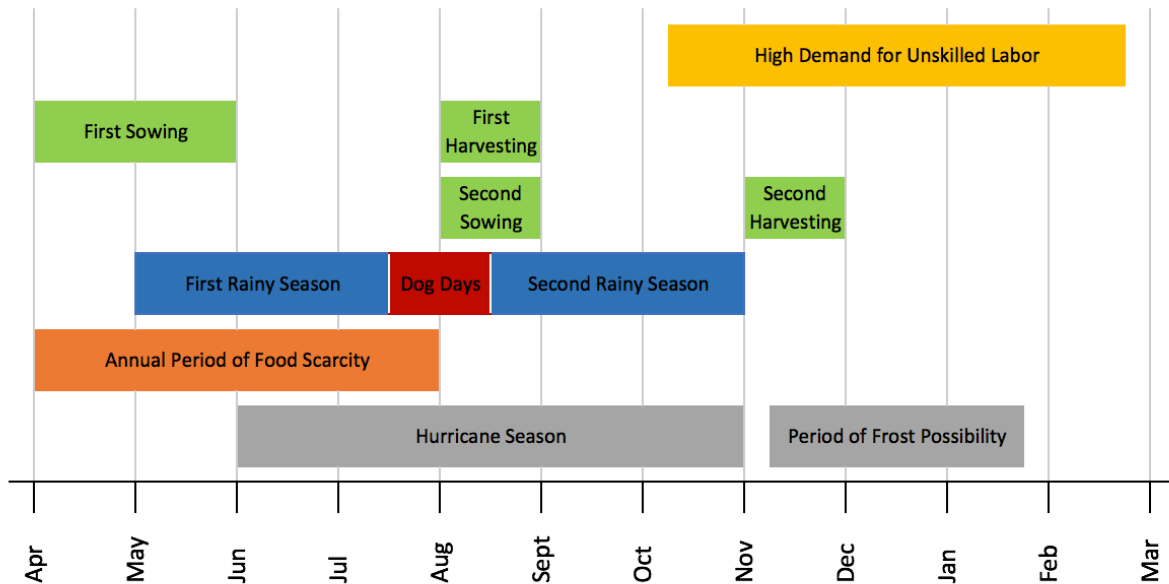
National and regional exclusion explains why the Ch’orti’ population depends on poor lands for survival. Pressured by epidemics, natural disasters, and forced labor, communities have historically moved away to rugged mountain slopes poorly suited to the subsistence agriculture. In the mountains, the use of land has been so intensive that almost all the forests have been cleared for more subsistence agriculture, exposing the slopes directly to tropical downpours and erosion and diminishing key resources for the subsistence lifestyle, including herbs, fruit, greens, firewood, and construction materials (Dary, Elías and Reyna 1998). Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the population has grown at unprecedented rates and the mountains no longer provide enough land for big families to successfully continue to use historical survival strategies (Metz 2006). In short, subsistence agriculture does not guarantee a sustainable source of food for Ch’orti’ families due to environmental degradation and population growth.

As a result of the self-perpetuating cycle of environmental degradation and population growth, Ch’orti’ people are periodically exposed to chronic food shortages that brutally impact the population’s culture and ethos (Metz 1995). Ch’orti’ people depend on subsistence agriculture in sometimes eroded and insufficient land, seasonal labor on coffee or sugar cane plantations, and selling utilitarian crafts, often to exploitative middlemen. In periodic years of low rainfall, or due to unforeseen events (such as droughts, earthquakes, plagues, economic crises, or prolonged dog days²), grain harvests fall and more seek plantation employment from

² *La canícula* is a dry period in July-August that divides the rainy seasons.

November to April. Throughout these periodic food shortages, some communities average enough land and food to feed themselves, but many do not (Dary et al. 1998; Metz 2006). Food shortages are locally conceptualized as *Xiximay*, spirit of feeling unsatiated (Metz 2006, 135; Girard 1949, 333; Wisdom 1961, 454), or *Mal de Julio*, the curse of July (Ramírez 2008).

Figure 2: Cycle of Food Scarcity in the Ch’orti’ Maya area.



Source: adapted from Vivero 2011.

Anthropologists have found that the biggest threat to survival in populations suffering structural violence is premature death of preventable causes. In Alto do Cruzeiro in the 1960s and 1970s, infants and toddlers died from severe diarrhea and dehydration, conditions curable with a simple sugar, salt, and water solution (Scheper-Hughes 1987). Similarly, infectious diseases would wither bodies slowly despite known cures in Haiti in the early 2000s (Farmer 2004). In the Ch’orti’ Maya area, preventable diseases often place children, the ill, and the elderly at the edge of survival during periodic periods of chronic food shortage. What is more, epidemics and natural disasters increase the number of deaths of preventable diseases, and as a result the Ch’orti’ population has suffered cycles of sudden decrease as well as increase due to

lack of family planning (Metz 2006). Premature death from preventable diseases is not a medical condition, but the symptom of structural violence. Indeed, temporarily treating individual cases of malnutrition does not guarantee long-term survival for populations suffering food scarcity.

Structural violence also impacts communities' identity and social fabric. Although Ch'orti' people have been noted for their generosity and positive sense of territoriality and belonging, households also experience frustration, hopelessness, and indignity when they are facing periods of food shortage. Sometimes, tolerance for suffering emerges in the form of fatalistic narratives that explain food scarcity, such as the spirit of insatiability, *Xiximay*, who is known to invade food supplies (Wisdom 1940; Metz 2006:135). During *mal de Julio*, households running out of food reserves later than their neighbors are unable to help others, and as solidarity decreases delinquency often increases (Ramírez Juárez 2008). Indeed, envy among neighbors intensified in Ch'orti' communities since dictator Jorge Ubico established networks of civilian espionage and persecuted of many forms of social organization, from religious to political groups and even cooperatives (Metz 2006). Historically, exposure to food scarcity has forced Ch'orti' communities to sacrifice community integration.

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN GUATEMALA: FROM THE COLD WAR TO A PARADOXICAL DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

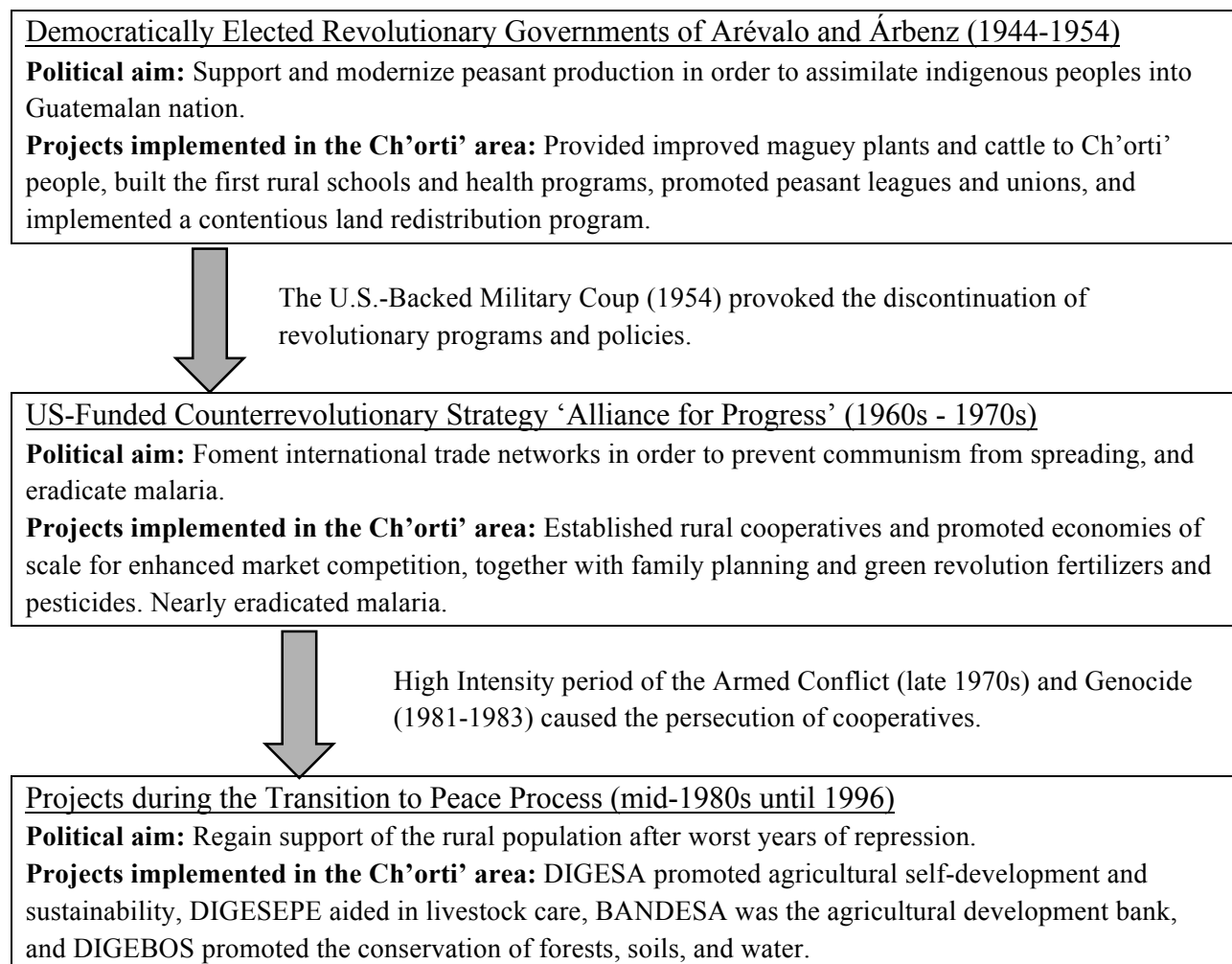
The Jocotán Parish, which includes most of the territory in the Ch'orti' Maya area, receives more development attention than the rest of eastern Guatemala because of its high indigenous population and extreme poverty. In 2009, government offices implemented 79 projects in Jocotán, Camotán, San Juan Ermita and Olopa (SEGEPLAN 2009), and at least 30 NGOs operated in the same municipalities in 2010 (Consejo Municipal de Desarrollo Camotán, SEGEPLAN 2010). In this section, I contextualize two waves of project proliferation in the Ch'orti' Maya area by explaining the shift from government projects influenced by the Cold War, to multiple short projects influenced by a paradoxical democratic transition. Whereas political interests played a predominant role in shaping government development interventions in the 1940s-1980s, ever since neoliberal governments have been less involved and projects have been run by NGOs of various sizes and specializations with little long-term vision or coordination, projects have been leaving many people and problems to fall through gaps.

Development Projects During the Cold War

Prior to project proliferation, development interventions used to last a number of years and impacted large regions in recipient countries. In the context of the World War II reconstruction, the goal of the newborn global development industry was to incentivize national economic growth through large amounts of capital for investment in infrastructure, planning, and industrialization (Thorbecke 2000). Donor countries would allocate funding through bilateral and multilateral agreements, and agencies like the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) played a prominent role in shaping policy. Perhaps because of the volume of aid flows and the capacity of projects to transform national economies, political interests from both

donor and recipient countries came into play. In the Ch'orti' Maya area, both the Cold War doctrine professed by the United States and the Guatemalan Civil War ideology shaped development interventions before project proliferation. As shown in Figure 3, the largest government-sponsored development interventions from the 1940s to the 1980s were politicized in Guatemala, and ideological and political changes resulted in the discontinuation of previous projects and the reformulation of new ones.

Figure 3: Timeline of Government-sponsored Development Projects in the Ch'orti' Region (1940s - 1980s)



Sources: (Metz, Mariano and López García 2010, Metz 2006, Dary, Elías and Reyna 1998).

Due to the Cold War and U.S. companies' economic interests, the U.S. government used its power to affect funding allocation from WB and IMF to Guatemala from the 1940s to the 1980s. During the Ten Years of Democracy³, the United Fruit Company found Guatemalan land redistribution program undesirable and lobbied U.S. politicians toward withholding loan assistance and technical cooperation from the country. Labeled as communist, the Guatemalan government did not receive loans from the World Bank between 1949 and 1954 (Krenn 1996). After the 1954 military coup, U.S.-funded projects promoting international trade networks provided an advantage for transnational corporations operating in Guatemala (Metz 2006, 61-63, 240). Despite human rights violations, U.S. funding continued throughout the Guatemalan Civil War (1960-1996)⁴ and declined when it was clear that the guerrillas were largely defeated (Metz 2006). In short, foreign political and economic interests shaped the largest government development interventions in Guatemala between the 1940s and the 1980s. Rather than aiming to eliminate food scarcity in the Ch'orti' Maya area, these projects had more ideological, political, and economic aims.

Despite the Guatemalan Civil War, religious missionaries have implemented development interventions in the Ch'orti' Maya area since the 1960s. I suggest their proximity to Ch'orti' communities and independent sources of funding made religious interventions more informed of the needs of the population than government development interventions of the time. For instance, two generations of Quakers moved to the region and offered technological and financial development to particular communities (Metz 2006). Although projects heavily relied

³ The decade of 1944-1954 is an interlude between the Jorge Ubico thirty-year dictatorship and the Guatemalan Civil War, in which much of the population became electorally enfranchised.

⁴ During the Guatemalan Civil War (1960-1996), citizen surveillance and state repression re-emerged in response to guerrilla groups. Maya communities (83% of the two million victims of violence) suffered geographical displacement and were the systematic target of rape, torture, and mass killings.

on missionaries' physical presence, such that they were partially abandoned when missionaries left, one can find many remnants of the projects today. At a larger scale, the Catholic Belgian Mission has promoted hundreds of development interventions in the Ch'orti' Maya area, including founding the Hospital Betania and Dispensary in Jocotán, the Fe y Alegría boarding school, the Ch'orti' radio, irrigation systems, and roads (Metz 2006). Because of its long-term presence in the region, the Belgian Mission has remarkably taken more responsibility for the welfare of the local population than the state, offering education, healthcare, communications, finance, and infrastructure services in the local sphere. Although the Catholic Action Network certainly responded to larger political events⁵, the Belgian Mission's funding depended on a religious network supporting missionaries rather than on foreign politics or the economic interests of private corporations. For that reason, missionaries were able to live in the region and become familiar with the needs of the population while implementing development interventions.

Although government interventions had the possibility of fostering indigenous peoples' integration to national politics and international economies from the 1940s to the 1980s, none of these efforts worked. First, democratic governments of the 1940s were trying to assimilate indigenous peoples into a national culture, but this was cut short by the counter-revolution in 1954. Afterwards, the U.S. Alliance for Progress considered cooperatives effective vehicles for incorporating indigenous peoples into international markets, but these were repressed locally for competing with Ladino interests and nationally and internationally for being "subversive." Finally, the state partially encouraged democratic citizenship by fostering the participation of

⁵ The Catholic Action Network originally formed as a missionary effort to prevent perceived communist atheism from spreading to indigenous communities. Nevertheless, missionaries witnessing the repression and exploitation of their poor congregants acquired more humanistic and openly progressive stances.

community leaders in development after the worst years of the Armed Conflict. Nevertheless, the fear of Ladino reprisal (Metz, Mariano and López García 2010), military repression of communal organization (Casolo 2011, 87), and communities' suspicion, refuge and distrust (Metz 2006) prevented Ch'orti' people from fully participating in national politics and international economies. Despite the Belgian Mission's efforts to promote political awakening and fellowship in the region, indigenous peoples were still excluded from national politics and international markets by the time the global development industry turned its attention to poverty reduction.

The transition from national economic growth to globally integrated poverty reduction since the 1970s involved a shift in both the objectives and the means of development practice. Instead of trying to impact national economies, new programs directly targeted poor populations through technical co-operation, policy-conditioned program aid, support for the private sector and for NGOs, and emergency assistance (Mosley and Marion 2000). In the 1970s, agencies started incorporating empowerment and participatory methodologies, as well as gender awareness. As the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) progressively incorporated more types of Official Development Assistance [ODA], multilateral and bilateral funding started decreasing. Agencies began hiring more outside contractors and consultants, and local and regional NGOs were contracted to implement projects because they were considered flexible and close to the communities (Nolan 2001, McMichael 2000). In short, the 1970s saw the beginning of a re-arrangement of the institutions and procedures that made development interventions possible.

The result of the policy transition from national economic growth to globally integrated poverty reduction was a market-oriented allocation of resources within the global development

industry. As multilateral and bilateral funding started decreasing and new actors (consultants and NGOs) joined the development industry, funding allocation started occurring through competitive bidding processes. First, donors establish a set of filters that determine how development funding is allocated globally. For instance, the World Bank establishes income group thresholds and the OECD prioritizes ‘aid orphan’ countries. Although donors allocate funding to areas of the greatest need or topics they consider important (human rights, peace, democracy, transparency, or economic stability), they also allocate funding based on their political interests or speculation. For instance, many donors decided to divert funding to Africa to compete with attention from China in the mid 2000s. Beyond determining which development agency will implement which project, the market-oriented allocation of development resources fosters the emergence of service economies in particular beneficiary regions of the world when funding is abundant. In turn, they foster competition when funding decreases, as regional and local development agencies compete in bidding and grant-writing for project funds allocated by donors great and small.

In the Ch’orti’ Maya area, the arrival of World Vision in 1970 was a direct product of the re-arrangement of the global development industry in market-oriented terms. As opposed to previous projects funded through government-to-government bilateral transferences or religious networks, World Vision incorporated a mechanism for sponsoring children in cycles of three years. In a nutshell, the mechanism consists on establishing an international network of offices dedicated to fundraising, administration, and aid delivery. Donors get to choose a child in need of sponsorship and commit to donate a monthly amount. Then, the local aid delivery office is in charge of facilitating communication between the sponsor and the child, as well as providing a set of gifts for the child and their family –such as clothes, school supplies, and sometimes food.

Although many humanitarian organizations have expanded by adopting such model, World Vision was by far the earliest to arrive to the Ch'orti' Maya. Arguably, the worst years of the Guatemalan Civil War kept humanitarian institutions from reaching all regions of the country, and instead fostered the arrival of human rights commissions interested in documenting the atrocities committed by both the Guatemalan army and guerrilla groups during the 1980s. The Ch'orti' Maya area experienced a wave of non-governmental development projects (with funding allocated in market-oriented terms) during the peace process in the 1990s, which redoubled after a regional famine in 2001.

Neoliberal Economics, Peace Politics, and Project Proliferation

...capital tended to flow directly from private and multilateral funding agencies to specific local constituencies or projects. Economically, these direct flows were seen as being more cost-effective, efficient and flexible. Politically, this method dovetailed with second-wave of democratization efforts that sought to strengthen civil society and cultivate transparency (DeHart 2009).

In the 1990s, the end of the Armed Conflict fostered a complex transition to democracy in Guatemala. While governments started adopting neoliberal economic policies, which gradually weakened the state, the peace process fostered the possibility of promoting a democratically active citizenship. After years of economically crippling warfare and debt, governments of the early 1990s began to follow U.S. and IMF recipes for market liberalization by opening Guatemalan borders to international trade, privatizing national industries, decentralizing government institutions, and cutting government spending.⁶ In the meantime, the

⁶ The global development industry as a whole promoted neoliberal policies. Through the 1980s, donor countries redirected development funding to salvage the shaky international financial system caused by the oil crisis and consequent institutional debt crisis (Thorbecke 2000). Structural adjustment programs

government and the organization representing all of the guerrilla factions –Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional de Guatemala (URNG)– negotiated and signed a number of agreements to protect citizens’ human rights, resettle displaced communities, clarify historical events, recognize indigenous rights, and set socioeconomic and agrarian policies. Throughout the negotiations, relationships between human rights defenders and grass-roots communities proliferated and intensified, unleashing a flood of international development activity in the countryside (DeHart 2009). Upon the completion of the Peace Accords, almost \$2 billion in additional foreign aid, mostly by governments, was channeled to Guatemala for reconstruction. Although the initial purpose of funding for development was to rebuild the country and strengthen the new democracy, the NGO sector proliferated with no practical oversight or coordination (Rohloff, Kraemer Díaz and Dasgupta 2011). Indeed, as donors began to allocate funding through market-oriented mechanisms, development projects diverged from their initial commitment to strengthen democracy.

In the 1990s, the Ch’orti’ area saw a retraction of government sponsored development programs, the rise of indigenous-focused projects, emergency aid for a cholera epidemic, a hurricane, and famine, and a large-scale UN-coordinated project meant to supplement subsistence agriculture with market-oriented peasant production. The last project, PROZACHI, funded by the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), spent nearly \$2 million in several municipios from 1991-2002 and on agriculture technology, infrastructure, training, and loans to incentivize market competition. While the credit and workshops were

consisted of bilateral and multilateral loans promoting market liberalization through attached conditionality (Nolan 2002). Structural adjustment programs transformed the terms of global economic integration, as recipient countries were forced to compete in international markets but with clear disadvantages. The poor in recipient countries were the most affected (Nash 2006).

much appreciated, the project relied on inadequate financial assessments and ultimately resulted in uneven and unpayable debt in many communities (Casolo 2011). In the meantime, a conglomeration of agencies emerging from the Peace Accords attended to issues of ethnic and gender discrimination, political participation, education, and land tenure. The Coordinadora Maya Ch'orti' (COMACH), part of a larger Mayanist network funded largely by European government donors as well as transnational NGOs, promoted political participation and positive identity. The Catholic Church, which played a critical role in the Peace Accords, also devoted itself to human rights in the decade. However, neither PROZACHI nor the human rights groups reversed the structural inequalities behind food scarcity, although some families managed to improve their standing significantly by using the aid to their tactical advantage (Metz 2007).

While emergent development agencies simultaneously promoted market competition and political participation of indigenous peoples, two local emergencies in the 1990s fostered the arrival of humanitarian assistance for the first time in the Ch'orti' region since the 1976 earthquake. During the 1992 cholera epidemic, Red Cross International coordinated the delivery of humanitarian assistance, but distrust between Ch'orti' people and Ladinos did not allow an effective distribution of aid (Metz 2006). Later, during the 1998 Hurricane Mitch, Elías Gramajo (1999) observed a cycle of dependency and paternalism in the process of delivering humanitarian aid. In the aftermath of catastrophes, some agencies started implementing development projects that were often discontinued before they could sustain any long-term results. For instance, Catholic Relief Services and USAID funded a four-year project based on reconciliation and justice after Hurricane Mitch. A local development practitioner stated:

The diocese promoted processes of collective emotional recovery. We were many employees, maybe 60 or 70 people. We worked on land tenure, especially where we knew community conflicts had occurred. One by one, projects ended. Each project lasted 2 or 3 years. (...) We attended communities in Zacapa, Teculután, Gualán, Camotán,

Olopa, La Unión, and Huité. After USAID stopped funding this program, I saw them again in 2008, but they were promoting local economic development with the Mancomunidad Copán Ch'orti.

After the country-wide project proliferation of the 1990s, funding started decreasing in Guatemala due to a strong and lingering 'aid fatigue' (see Thorbecke 2000). In 1992, precisely at the end of the Cold War, funding for development started decreasing worldwide for the first time in history, and deciding where to allocate limited resources became even more contentious (Hjertholm and White 2000). Categorized as a middle-income developing country since 1989, Guatemala remained a priority for donor agendas for as long as the peace process lasted. When a national referendum aiming to follow up the peace process was rejected due to elite interference in 1999, international funding for development dried up. In the context of decreasing funding and an incomplete peace process, donor nations and development agencies rethought their initial broad commitment to strengthen democracy and rebuild the country. Depending on sources of funding, local and regional Guatemalan NGOs continued to survive by tending to particular issues of interest for the global development industry. Currently, they address a broad range of agendas ranging from healthcare (Rohloff, Kraemer Díaz and Dasgupta 2011) to rural sustainable development (DeHart 2009) and ecotourism (Dickins 2007).

The second wave of project proliferation in the Ch'orti' Maya area occurred despite decreasing funding for the country, through a political process of calling national and international attention to food scarcity in the region. In 2001, the mayor of Jocotán did not have the support of the political party of the country's president because he belonged to a different political party. Without national funding, the mayor decided to attract media attention to the needs of the Ch'orti' region. The *Xiximay*, or *Mal de Julio*, had been particularly harsh that year due to decreasing coffee prices the year before, and the media portrayed the 2001 famine as a

one-time emergency starting in August, thereby hiding the structural dynamics of food scarcity in the region (see López 2009). The result was a burst of national and international funding for humanitarian aid and development, but without a delivery strategy.

Local development practitioners report confusion, disorganization, and even the selling of humanitarian food by beneficiaries. Although some initiatives were potentially capable of challenging food scarcity after the famine in 2001, the government did not invest enough in keeping them working. For instance, the Ministry of Health investigated a set of indicators that predicted malnutrition at an early stage and designed an intervention capable of providing early emergency healthcare before kids went through episodes of severe diarrhea and dehydration. Nevertheless, the process was discontinued soon due to lack of funding when public attention shifted elsewhere. Although many initiatives of the time were discontinued due to lack of funding, new development agencies emerged. In 2001, four local municipalities (Jocotán, Camotán, San Juan Ermita, and Olopa) established the Mancomunidad Copán Ch'orti' to attract funding for development in the Jocotán Parish. They acquired a model suggested by Spanish donors, and wrote a 30-year development plan. The Municipal Code regulated the functions of Mancomunidad Copán Ch'orti' in 2003, and it has since attracted millions of dollars for development throughout the years. Some development agencies in the Ch'orti' Maya area say the Mancomunidad monopolizes most donors, and there have been rumors of corruption among the Mancomunidad, the mayors, and construction contractors.

If the first wave of project proliferation fostered the emergence of multiple development agencies, the 2001 famine provoked bureaucratic changes in already existent agencies through the arrival of new funding from outsiders. For instance, although PROZACHI funding was over in 2002, donors and practitioners encouraged the formation of ASORECH, an association of

people who had collaborated with PROZACHI. COMACH also suffered institutional instability because of a lack of accountability and declining international funding for indigenous causes in Guatemala (Metz 2007). Since then, funding cycles of booms and busts have produced abundant and simultaneous projects, which are shorter and narrower in scope, with impacts that last little past the end of projects. As I will explain in the following chapters, coordination toward challenging food scarcity has been almost impossible.

ANALYZING OBSTACLES IN DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE

Project proliferation in the Ch'orti' Maya area was the result of a re-arrangement of the global development industry, where donors began to allocate funding in market-oriented terms, and a complex transition to democracy in Guatemala, where development projects gradually diverged from their initial commitment to strengthen democracy. What obstacles prevent development projects from changing the structural causes of food scarcity in the Ch'orti' Maya area after project proliferation? In this chapter, I describe the theoretical framework ethnographies of aid offer for analyzing the development interventions, and my methodology.

Ethnographies of Development

Anthropological approaches to development have historically responded to changes in the global development industry. In the 1970s, when international agencies turned their attention to poverty reduction, practitioner anthropologists and sociologists analyzed their personal experiences of working for development agencies and proposed a variety of lessons for practice, including participatory, empowering, and gender-informed approaches and methodologies (Cernea 1985, Chambers 2008). Although their contributions helped re-shape implementation processes, their suggestions did not ameliorate the political and economic interests involved in development practice. When the uneven consequences of structural adjustment programs exploded in the 1990s, anthropologists became interested in studying the geopolitical interests of development by critically deconstructing its historical claims (Escobar 1994) and describing the role of projects in expanding bureaucratic state power (Ferguson 1994). Although such contributions turned anthropological attention to development's political and economic interests, their conceptualization of development as a machine of all-encompassing calculated geopolitics

did not represent the diversity of situations that occur in development practice.

In the aftermath of such oft-decontextualized anthropological approaches to development, scholars tend to polarize the practical / instrumental approach (development anthropology), with its moral commitment to become involved with development practice, and the critical deconstructionist perspective (anthropology of development) (Gow 2002). Indeed, anthropologists seemingly expect one another to take a position ‘for or against development’ by explaining developments’ deleterious side effects as either misinformed mistakes or the result of calculated geopolitics and economic self-interest. In contrast, a new generation of development anthropologists propose to abandon the dichotomy of engagement / armchair critique by investigating development programs and projects as socially constructed, transcultural processes. David Mosse (2004), one of the proponents of ethnographies of development, mentions:

I am not concerned here with ‘best practice’ or lessons for replication. (...) I am not interested, as some critical analysts are, with passing judgment on development. My concern is not whether, but *how* development works. The approach is *ethnographic*.

Beyond doing fieldwork in NGO settings, ethnographies of development offer a theoretical framework from which to analyze the development industry in the context of globalization. On the one hand, doing ethnography of development involves recognizing that the global development industry has become multi-sited. Thus, anthropologists attend to development processes as overlapping arenas of social networks and discourses with actors of varying interests and tools at their disposal (De Sardan 2005). Ethnographers of development also recognize that development is not only a process of adding new discourses and resources, but often subtracting:

We tend to evaluate development in terms of outcomes and gains (e.g., incomes, goods and services), but it is also important to evaluate it in terms of what people give up or lose (and why they resist) in experiencing development in these terms (McMichael 2000).

My thesis analyzes the obstacles to changing the structural causes of food scarcity in the Ch'orti' Maya areas. As mentioned earlier, the experiences and perspectives of local development practitioners I interviewed highlight two obstacles in particular: (1) funding fluctuation inhibits long-term planning and collaboration among local agencies, and (2) donors and local politicians ensure a portion of development funding benefits them before practitioners get to implement projects. First, development projects in the Ch'orti' Maya area have become attempts to create 'easy ways out of poverty'. Although decades of experience have taught local development practitioners that challenging food scarcity requires holistic, long-term interventions, funding fluctuation does not allow projects to seek structural changes. Thus, projects have treated the symptoms but not the causes of food scarcity. Second, while development practitioners are required to account for every penny they spend, they have observed cases of politicians and donors making sure a portion of development resources benefits them before the money is spent in projects. Practitioners call this practice 'slicing a piece of cake for themselves'. Given that the interests of local politicians and industries connected with donors prevail over beneficiary population's needs, corruption and expenses requirements have in the past prevented projects from challenging structural causes of food scarcity.

My analysis challenges the assumption that a market-oriented allocation of resources offers promising avenues for reducing poverty. I illustrate a variety of reasons why projects, instead of producing long-term results, become vulnerable to political interests in the Ch'orti' Maya. Projects do not produce sustainable effects, and the benefits of development interventions and humanitarian aid do not arrive to all households that need them. Why have development interventions been unable to provide benefits to communities evenly and steadily?

Methodology

The objective of my methodology was to collect and analyze the experiences and perspectives of local development practitioners in the Ch'orti' Maya area regarding the obstacles projects encounter for challenging structural causes of food scarcity. In the summer of 2015, I spent eight weeks doing ethnographic fieldwork throughout the Ch'orti' Maya area. There are four predominantly Ch'orti' municipalities the size of a small U.S. county in the department of Chiquimula: Jocotán, Camotán, San Juan Ermita, and Olopa. While all the development practitioners I interviewed implemented projects targeting communities in these municipalities, their homes and offices were more often located in larger urban towns. Thus, I spent most of the time in Chiquimula and frequently traveled to development offices located in Jocotán, Quetzaltepeque, and Esquipulas. My fieldwork was funded by a Tinker travel award from the KU Center of Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

I interviewed a total of 17 people. Ten of them were local development practitioners who provided narratives of typical obstacles projects encounter for challenging food scarcity, and seven were local experts who provided knowledge about public institutions, alternative jobs, political issues and local history. Since both development practitioners and local experts belong to the local network of development practitioners, I used a snowball sampling technique to contact and interview all study participants. I began by contacting three local NGO workers my advisor recommended, and continued contacting more participants throughout the 8 weeks of my fieldwork. Although the sample is not representative or generalizable, it is illustrative of the kinds of obstacles development projects encounter in the Ch'orti' Maya area for challenging food scarcity.

Figure 4: Location of the Ch'orti' Maya Area of Eastern Guatemala



Source: Map by Amy Henderson, published in Metz 1998 (328).

The sample of local development practitioners who provided narratives of typical obstacles in development practice was fairly homogeneous. Most were men in their 40's and 50's who had worked for at least two development agencies funded by international agencies in

the Ch'orti' area. Six of them had been trained as agricultural engineers at the University of San Carlos (CUNORI), Chiquimula campus, and several held a diversity of senior and lower positions within agencies, ranging from technicians to directors and even board members of NGOs (see Table 1). In turn, the sample of local experts was very heterogeneous, as each person provided a particularly important outside perspective on what development meant for their field of expertise (see Table 2). The following charts summarize the study sample. In order to protect participants' identities, I will keep their comments anonymous.

Table 1: Interviewees Providing Typical Experiences of Development Practice

	Interviewee Position	Agency / Institution	Location
1	NGO Director	ASOVERDE (Green Development Association)	Chiquimula
2	Project Director	ProCh'orti' (Ch'orti' Project)	Jocotán
3	Technician	Save the Children	Chiquimula
4	NGO Director	ASORECH	Quetzaltepeque
5	Technician	Acción Contra el Hambre (Action Against Hunger)	Chiquimula
6	Technical Manager	Plan Trifinio	Esquipulas
7	General Manager	Mancomunidad Copán Ch'orti'	Jocotán
8	Technician	Save the Children	Chiquimula
9	Technician	World Vision	Jocotán
10	Program Manager	Oxfam	Guatemala City

Table 2: Interviewees Providing Local Expert Knowledge

	Interviewee Position / Institution	Area of Expertise
1	Catholic Priest (Belgian Mission)	Local history of development
2	Faculty Member at CUNORI	Agriculture Program at CUNORI
3	National Institute of Forests [INAB]	Forest conservation programs
4	General Secretary of Planning [SEGEPLAN]	Government Decentralization
5	Hotel Ramírez owner	Politics and local networks
6	Ch'orti' Maya Technical High School in Natural Resources	Education and local job market
7	Entrepreneur, former development worker	Local economy and politics

I discovered some of the inner workings of the local development network in the process of contacting and interviewing people. First, I found that internal hierarchies are recognized by

the position practitioners hold (e.g., technician vs. director), and where their offices are located (higher status in Chiquimula, much higher status in Guatemala City). Second, I found that partnerships among local development workers have fostered the sharing of ideas and practices related to project implementation in times of funding availability, but gossip and competition when funding has decreased. Finally, practitioners' connection with CUNORI reveals that most local development workers have similar job qualifications, which diminishes the potential for incorporating multidisciplinary approaches but enhances the potential for incorporating university students and doing research in collaboration with the university.

I learned the most about the obstacles for addressing food scarcity through the 17 interviews I conducted. For each interview, I explained my research topic and broadly asked about their experience while working on development interventions in the Ch'orti' Maya area. Participants and I discussed the origins and proliferation of development interventions, the problems that arise with funding fluctuation and changing 'hot topics' of the development industry, the challenging interactions between projects, donors, and local governments, and the difficulties of navigating the job market. I used thematic analysis for the interviews, carefully listening to all of them and paying particular attention to the obstacles for project implementation mentioned. I transcribed key quotes and grouped them in two categories: (1) 'looking for easy ways out of poverty', when funding fluctuation fosters competing short-term projects unable to produce structural changes, and (2) 'slicing development resources like a cake,' when availability of funding has been contingent on whether politicians or donors themselves benefit from the interventions.

Beyond my internship with Nuevo Día (New Day) in 2011 and interviewing study participants in the summer of 2015, my interactions with local development practitioners

involved participating in a workshop with the NGO ASOVERDE (Green Development Association), participating in a community meeting with the NGO ProCh'orti' (Project Ch'orti'), and participating in a number of meetings with Engineers Without Borders, ASORECH (Ch'orti' Peasant Regional Association), and local community recipients of a rural water project and an ecotourism project. Throughout such experiences, my own identity and the identity of development practitioners who participated in the study colored our interactions. Indeed, ethnographers are never just 'observers'; like it or not, we are committed actors socially interconnected with people who experience the dynamics we are trying to understand. I was younger than the local development workers I interviewed, and the fact that I am studying the Masters degree at a foreign university placed me in a position of privilege compared to the types of jobs to which they have access. A few pointed out they never had the opportunity to study abroad, and their lack of opportunities resulted in the types of jobs they have today. The men, therefore, enjoyed being the professional authorities and conveyers of knowledge to a young, privileged woman. Overall, they happily contributed to this study and were interested (and very curious) to learn about what I had learned in previous interviews.

ADAPTING TO THE RHYTHMS OF FUNDING FLUCTUATION

In this chapter, I describe how funding fluctuation fosters competing short-term projects unable to produce structural changes. When development practitioners find themselves adapting to the rhythms of funding fluctuation', they can only feign to implement 'easy ways out of poverty'. As mentioned earlier, the examples I present here are not generalizable nor representative of what 'always' happens with development practice in the region. Rather, these examples illustrate the kinds of obstacles that have arisen to a greater or lesser extent in the past.

Looking for Easy Ways Out

*When there was money, much more money than there is today, they did not think of a more reasonable strategy. They were looking for the easy way out –
Development Practitioner*

When the 2001 famine got media attention and development practitioners started arriving to the Ch'orti' Maya area to deliver humanitarian aid, they engaged in multiple discussions over the causes of food shortage. Assuming the famine was a one-time event, development practitioners were eager to find a simple explanation for it. They first thought food scarcity was the result of an unusual draught, but they dismissed the hypothesis when they realized rain patterns in 2001 were similar to other years. When they discovered a correlation between low coffee prices and cases of acute malnutrition, they resolved to break the dependence upon low skilled labor by facilitating local production for the market and subsistence. My informants remember projects involving iguanas, rabbits, quails, chickens, goats, sheep, and fish; but there have also been initiatives promoting soap, jocote fruit (tropical plum), baskets, tomatoes, onions, pineapples, and small mats for decorating commercial rum bottles. In the words of one interviewee, the region became a 'laboratory of things that do not work,' where projects have

temporarily benefitted individual families to a greater or lesser extent, but without challenging structural violence.

Looking for the easy way out in development means trying to find a solution that fixes all the problems of the region, but without fully understanding the complex structural causes of food scarcity. For instance, although reliance on low skilled labor in coffee plantations is an important component of structural violence in the Ch'orti' region, promoting alternative sources of money does not guarantee a sustainable source of food because other structural dynamics, such as population growth, and environmental factors, will continue to cause food shortages. What is more, many experiments required resources such as land or fodder that Ch'orti' people simply do not have. There is no easy way out of self-perpetuating cycles of food scarcity. I argue that development practitioners have looked for easy ways out of poverty because the resources at their disposal directly depend upon funding fluctuation. As donors multiplied, they were more specific in their expectations and required more concrete, short-term, measurable results, causing development practitioners to prioritize institutional needs over beneficiaries' needs. Meanwhile, funding decline has also sparked competition, rather than collaboration, between agencies.

Before doing fieldwork, I expected to find agencies with a large staff simultaneously implementing a diversity of short-term projects in a variety of communities of the Ch'orti' region. Instead, I found that most agencies were implementing one, or at the most two projects, and were in the process of applying for more funding. Some agencies I visited were desperate for funding, unable to offer the number of jobs they had offered in the past and afraid of losing their infrastructure and staff due to lack of funding. Under such circumstances, institutional survival was a priority for many. According to one NGO director, agencies need and demand funding in order to continue to work, and only when they have covered such need can they engage in

assessing and attending beneficiaries' needs. Because institutional needs come first and development practitioners need to ensure future funding, they write proposals for projects that follow 'hot topics' of the global development industry, sometimes paying little attention to beneficiary needs. One development practitioner I talked to mentioned that in order to attract more funding, agencies "dance to the rhythm of international cooperation." He said:

Agencies may talk about garbage and solid waste today, and they work on cleaning the city, but when funding is over, the initiative is discontinued. Then, they decide to talk about gender and they establish the office of the woman, but if international cooperation stops financing the office of the woman, they close it as if nothing happened. Environmental offices, forest offices, and what have you (NGO Director).

That the development industry continuously changes the vocabulary used to talk about development projects does not always mean that it is innovative in the types of strategies it promotes. Sometimes, it is quite the opposite. One NGO director recounted:

Twenty years later, some agencies keep doing the same things [that do not work]. Projects consist of delivering sinks, latrines, chickens, fertilizer... and now with "a focus on climate change", "intelligent agriculture", and what have you. But the discourse of climate smartness does not hold when you go to the communities and see what they are [really] doing: they gave three fruit trees to each household. What is the climate smartness of planting fruit trees? They are making the same mistake.

The incorporation of new approaches does not guarantee strategic innovation of strategies in the Ch'orti' Maya area because of a disconnect between policy and practice. Indeed, many practitioners mentioned that agencies continue to replicate projects that have not worked in the past. My informants seemed particularly bothered by what I will call the 'chicken project.' Criticized by six of my interviewees, the 'chicken project' consists of providing supplies for households to produce eggs they can either sell or consume. One practitioner working for a governmental office mentioned:

We deliver 12 chickens and 1 rooster [to 1 household], but the chicken project is only profitable if you own 500 chickens. What is a woman with 12 eggs doing in town [at the market]? She spent Q5 to get there, Q5 to go back, and she is going to sell her eggs for a

total of Q12. Why did we give her 12 chickens? So she remains poor. So she eats the eggs.

Overall, my informants think the ‘chicken project’ is too expensive for the benefits it provides. A few pitfalls of the ‘chicken project’ they mentioned include the lack of a guaranteed market, competition against economies of scale in the poultry industry, the high costs of supplies, and the fact that beneficiaries depend on agencies to get supplies (which is unsustainable). What is more, the benefits of the ‘chicken project’ last little past its implementation because families end up eating the chickens when they no longer produce enough eggs. None of the development practitioners knew exactly how often agencies actually replicate the ‘chicken project’, but the amount of criticism it received says something about the lack of mechanisms to prevent agencies from ‘recycling’ development recipes that have not worked in the past. Although development practitioners have certainly learned from previous mistakes, many are willing to continue to implement projects that have not worked in the past, arguably, as a strategy to meet institutional needs and feed their own families.

While agencies sometimes replicate old recipes that do not work, innovative projects are often discontinued before they can trigger any long-term results due to lack of funding. For instance, one agency implemented a project aiming to restore forest systems by paying beneficiaries for maintaining good practices of conservation on their own land. Although the project was a sustainable alternative for impacting environmental deterioration while providing a source of economic access to food, it only lasted eight months. According to the development practitioner I talked to, the project would have had to continue for at least five years in order to start impacting land deterioration. In this case, as in others, donors’ insistence on measurable and short-term results undermined the possibility of challenging structural causes of food scarcity. While pre- and post-project analyses are standardly written, it is well known in the development

industry that they are often ignored, including by donors (Olivier de Sardan 2005; Chambers 2008). With little institutional memory and inadequate funding and time, the means to gauge the sustainable potential of new initiatives are weakened. Whether they work or not, most projects are discontinued when funding is over.

In a context where projects last only a few months and donors demand immediate results, local development agencies funnel scarce benefits to those with the greatest chances of success. That is, they sometimes choose particular beneficiaries who have in the past taken more advantage of projects than others. A local development worker told me the story of a woman who has received ‘at least something from everybody in the past ten years’: a greenhouse intended for 5 or 10 families, a new greenhouse a few years later by another agency, yet a third greenhouse from a third agency, a water system, and more infrastructure. Although admittedly the woman is very persistent and puts a lot of effort in maintaining the benefits of development interventions, my informant criticized agencies’ construal of her as a success. Another development worker mentioned that cases of success should not be generalized as solutions for everybody.

If Miss Juana lives in this community and we gave her 20 chickens, and she came to our workshops, and it turns out she now has 40 chickens and she is selling eggs... then agencies think they need a project of 2000 beneficiaries like her. But they will not find them. There is a limited number of women like Miss Juana [who would take advantage of the project so effectively] in the Ch’orti’ region, and we should not turn everybody into poultry farmers, just as we cannot turn everybody into bee-keepers, and we cannot turn everybody into coffee growers. Unfortunately, that is the aim of many projects [to have everybody produce the same things]. If the current hot topic is agroforestral systems with coffee, all agencies promote that. And I have seen coffee planted at 700 meters over sea level. Why would anybody grow coffee there? (...) They invest a lot of money, but only three to five good experiences remain.

Agencies also ‘sell’ images of indigeneity as a strategy to ensure funding. As donor money began to be directed towards eastern Guatemala, projects started focusing in four

municipalities – Jocotán, Camotán, San Juan Ermita, and Olopa. Although these are the four poorest and most indigenous of the region, the area does not neatly coincide with Ch’orti’ or destitute peasants’ geographic limits. Partly because of the multiculturalism trend in the 1990s, and partly because of the media explosion of 2001, the word *Ch’orti’* became popular and development agencies started using it to legitimize their projects to donors. If during the Peace Accords calling the area Ch’orti’ was a statement of self-determination, today agencies use it yet as another word to attract funding. One of my interviewees stated:

The famous Ch’orti’ region is unique in that it has been restricted to four municipalities. For instance, if you are doing research in the Ch’orti’ region, I would suggest you compare the conditions or situations you will measure within the four municipalities [Jocotán, Camotán, San Juan Ermita and Olopa], which for political reasons people recognize as the Ch’orti’ region, and other municipalities with Ch’orti’ inhabitants. That is, go visit Quetzaltepeque, La Unión Zacapa, the highest part of Chiquimula, San Jacinto, Esquipulas, the highest part of Zacapa. And you will find huge differences [in how little exposure to development projects there is in Ch’orti’ communities that are not located in the Jocotán Parish]. Many people say they do not want to work in the Ch’orti’ region [in the Jocotán Parish] because there is no room for another agency. The so-called Ch’orti’ region is saturated.

As mentioned at the beginning of my thesis, I also had the impression that the Ch’orti’ region was saturated with development agencies when I first visited in December 2011. When visiting Ch’orti’ communities, it is easy to find multiple projects aiming to impact the same situations. Such abundance and multiplicity of development interventions fosters competition at all levels, and prevents agencies from coordinating efforts.

Competing for Funding and Beneficiaries

Just like institutional needs, competition creates incentives for development practitioners not to take care of beneficiaries’ needs. The earliest case of competition I heard was during the wave of project proliferation in the early 1990s. One of my informants remembers that, since the

beginning of the project, people in charge of administering funding wanted to deliver positive results before other projects did so in Western Guatemala, and they would constantly pressure technicians to deliver rapid results. Although development practitioners continuously found challenges they wanted to address before providing more loans (such as lack of education, the need for beneficiaries to clearly understand the terms of credits, etc.), they were pressured toward rapidly advancing with project results:

[Employees were told that] if they did not distribute loans, the money would go to Africa. And so they started providing credits and credits, and some loans were not viable, and some people [beneficiaries] did not even know how to use the money because landowners used to pay them with sugar, oil, and coffee back then.

Since 2000, competition has been related to the overabundance of development agencies and not so much to rush implementation to deliver the first results. Intentionally or not, agencies often implement the same initiatives in the same locations, without communicating with one another to coordinate efforts. As a result, some communities get a lot of attention while others are abandoned. In communities with a lot of attention, some projects inadvertently provide benefits that discourage people from participating in other projects. For instance, a development practitioner narrated the case of a project that consisted of multiplying seeds. The technician would give 25 pounds of seeds to each beneficiary, expecting them to produce a hundredweight of seeds after harvesting. Beneficiaries were required to return 25 pounds of seeds to the agency, and they could keep the other 75 pounds of seeds for themselves. The plan was to use the returned seeds to repeat the cycle in other communities. Beneficiaries agreed to such terms, until another agency started distributing seeds without asking for anything in return. As beneficiaries became unwilling to give seeds back, the project was discontinued. When beneficiaries receive similar projects simultaneously, smaller agencies unable to offer better benefits have much to lose. Among all narratives of competing projects, I found one case in which competition for

beneficiaries was a deliberate attempt to foster the failure of a particular project for political reasons.

We were able to work with COCODES⁷ in some places, but not in others. I remember we would go to a community and learned they had a COCODE. We would tell people, “it is important to talk about land tenure” and we would agree to meet on Tuesday at 2:00. But when we arrived on Tuesday, there was nobody [ready to meet us] at the community. What is going on [we thought]? We went to look for the president of the COCODE and he would tell us, “but you guys said we would meet at 8! I am sorry; I made a mistake”. It was kind of a weird response, but we would agree to meet at 10:00 another day, and at 9:45 we received a phone call [from the COCODE saying] “we need to attend a meeting with another agency and we cannot meet you today.” Then we visited a number of households [to ask what was going on] and we found that the COCODE was not inviting the community to our meetings because other agencies had told them not to attend our meetings. That kind of thing has happened, and continues to happen.

Intentionally or not, competition over numbers of beneficiaries has much to do with an agency’s reputation relative to others. Agencies with past expensive projects signal to donors that they are capable of managing large amounts of funding. Even though most projects are short-term and cheap, donors prefer to work with agencies that have implemented very expensive projects in the past, assuming they have better accountability practices.

International cooperation has changed their interest in the area and many [donors] have left. We get small projects from those who have remained here. For instance, Spain. I have not seen USAID lately in this sector. And I feel like agencies like World Vision, the German Cooperation, the World Bank, and BID... they are way too interested in partnering with municipal governments. They do not see us as their potential partners. (...)

Donors favor interventions backed up by the local government, and prefer to give funding to agencies that have spent large amounts of money in the past. We have found it difficult to find funding because international donors are looking for that partnership with the government, and it is hard for us. Why? Because there are too many injustices happening in municipalities. (...) The project we have right now ends this year, and we have

⁷ COCODE stands for Community Development Council (Consejo Comunitario de Desarrollo). COCODE are democratically elected leaders that represent their communities at departmental committees for decision-making, which establish budget spending priorities. Since 2002, the Guatemalan state legally recognizes and supports them as part of the System of Councils for Urban and Rural Development.

knocked on doors but cannot find funding. [Donors prefer to work with other agencies because] they have spent millions and millions in the past and we have barely managed a budget of one or two million.

Overall, competition over quicker results, beneficiaries, or donors has not made agencies better able to implement development interventions. Despite adding extra pressure to development practitioners, competition allows some agencies to keep growing, while others loose funding and disappear. What is more, agencies have become unwilling to work with one another due to past experiences of rivalry. A context of gossip and mutual vigilance governs the local network of development interventions and further polarizes local actors. During my fieldwork, I learned about one initiative directly trying to address the lack of coordination among agencies, but it failed due to asymmetries among agencies.

In 2005 I belonged to the Network of Cooperation of Chiquimula and became the coordinator, but we could barely work because we found limits in the dynamics of several agencies. The network was an effort to make alliances among agencies through SEGEPLAN⁸. We would meet once a month, alternating offices as a strategy to integrate efforts. We wanted to make a map of interventions to make sure there was no duplicity of efforts, and we wanted to have more projects where there was little concentration. We wanted development to be more balanced. It was a voluntary effort. I put a lot of effort on it, but agencies with more funding collaborated less than agencies with little funding. We asked them to pay for a secretary and to pay for the costs of coordinating among agencies, but they did not want to.

In short, one big obstacle for challenging structural causes of food scarcity is that funding fluctuation fosters competing short-term projects unable to seek structural changes. While trying to find a solution that fixes all the problems of the region, and without fully understanding the complex set of social arrangements that explain structural causes of food scarcity, development practitioners prioritize institutional needs and compete for funding or beneficiaries.

⁸ SEGEPLAN stands for Presidential Secretary of Planification and Planning (Secretaría de Planificación y Programación de la Presidencia), and it is a governmental office in charge of planning and coordinating budget for development projects between municipalities and central government. It was established in 1991 together with other decentralization policies.

SLICING DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES LIKE A CAKE

The project had goods: financial resources and infrastructure. When the project was about to end, about a year before it ended, people started thinking ‘hey, there is machinery (trucks, tractors, etc.), some money intended for institutional strengthening, and a flotilla of cars and motorcycles’. Everybody was thinking, ‘who is going to keep all that?’. A struggle began. (...) X agency inherited some goods, but not all of them, because the Ministry of Agriculture wanted to keep the vehicles for their municipal branches. Mayors kept the machinery. In short, there was a distribution of stuff. Although the distribution was more or less even, goods were not intended to be distributed at all: they are not a cake! But they [people who agreed to distribute goods] were trying to overcome a potential division between agencies... a division that nevertheless exists until today.

I found that the resources practitioners have at their disposal have sometimes been contingent upon whether politicians or donors benefit from a portion of the budget. While development practitioners are required to account for every penny they spend, they have observed politicians using funding for political purposes and donors establishing spending requirements that benefit industries connected to them. From the perspective of the development practitioners I interviewed, both politicians and donors engaging in such distribution of development resources are ‘slicing a cake piece of cake for themselves’ through legal or illegal mechanisms. Beyond preventing agencies from better channeling resources more effectively, such cases send a strong message about who may decide what to do with development resources and who is able to account for such decisions.

Getting Political Support

Development practitioners I interviewed have observed that politicians channel projects to beneficiaries in their political party or who are willing to vote for them. Most development practitioners I interviewed mentioned that the COCODE system does not work well in the

Ch'orti' Maya area because leaders are oftentimes elected by the mayors rather than by their communities, and mayors' principal criterion for electing them is their support during campaigns. Thus, COCODES often do not represent their communities and are obstacles, not enhancers, of development.

Sometimes, lack of education⁹ has made committees of rural representatives vulnerable to manipulation, such that they have 'willingly' allowed politicians to use funding for their political purposes. According to one of my interviewees, the Guatemalan government had acquired a loan to provide credits to farmers in the Ch'orti' Maya area when PROZACHI was over. The loan was worth more than 40 million Guatemalan quetzales, and a credit committee integrated by community representatives was in charge of deciding how to dispense it. According to my informants, politicians manipulated community representatives into signing an agreement that would allow the Ministry of Agriculture to use the loan to provide credits to farmers in the whole country (not only Eastern Guatemala), and instead of benefitting small farmers the credits started benefiting big producers. Eventually, the credit committee lost its power to decide what to do with the loan. Unfair as it seemed for my informants, everything had been done legally and there was no way to hold the Ministry of Agriculture accountable. The big mistake had been for the committee members to sign the agreements the Ministry of Agriculture prepared.

In short, even though the COCODE system law provides for representatives of rural communities to participate in decision-making about development issues that affect them, and despite the fact that community leaders have experience managing development funds, politicians have appropriated funding for political purposes. Not only is their selection of

⁹ Metz (personal communication) found that in the 1990s that the average education of Ch'orti' adults was one year of schooling, just enough to learn minimal literacy.

beneficiaries corrupt, they also sometimes hire employees based on political or personal connections. Indeed, many of my interviewees suggested that municipal offices hired more people than necessary in order to provide jobs for supporters, including to family or friends that will give them financial kickbacks. One local development practitioner mentioned:

Unfortunately, and despite the law says that 90% of municipal spending should be used as investment and 10% should be used for administrative costs, funding is used the other way around. They employ too many people! Every municipal government hires a group of people who participated in their campaign, and as a consequence our municipalities operate with around 700 employees.

I asked whether a similar situation occurred in local NGOs, and they replied,

[In some NGOs] administrative costs are 70% of the budget, and investment is only 30%. In Guatemala City, they have nice offices and people make good money. We do not even dream of those salaries! Yes, they [NGOs] offer a lot of jobs for technicians, but the big employer is still the municipality (...).

While no one could offer exact numbers of people benefitted by corruption, the percentages mentioned by local development practitioners during interviews are noteworthy. From their perspective, municipalities use employment as a means for attaining political support more often than NGOs. NGOs, in turn, are known for providing jobs with better salaries, which seems unfair to some local development workers. One reason a good salary seems unfair is that development practitioners, and specially those with lower positions as technicians, are required to account for every penny they spend. They often buy the cheapest lunches when planning an activity or workshop, use the cheapest means for transportation to the communities, and still end up ‘paying from their pocket’ after misunderstanding onerous accountability measures. The need for accounting all expenses through very specific methods is a result of international agencies emphasizing greater transparency and placing restrictions on project spending procedures.

Establishing Spending Requirements

USAID donates \$520 million to Guatemala. You could do anything you wanted with that kind of money! But they also require you to buy 50 Cherokee Jeep, pay 15 or 20 PhDs with great salaries, etc. What trickles down to communities is very little! – Local Development Practitioner

Donors are the first to decide how development funding will be spent. According to development practitioners I interviewed, when donors place spending requirements, such as a set of cars or the importation of aid goods, they sometimes cut significant portions of funding that could be used for more important purposes. What is more, when donors establish spending requirements onto projects, they often benefit industries in their national economies rather than local economies.

If they need to buy fumigating pumps, they import them. They do not buy them from local businesses. (...) Sometimes the donor says, “you need to buy things made in this place,” It happens with some donors more than with others. If you go to X agency, for instance, you will find Land Rovers because their donor is the European Union, and you will find Nissan vehicles that are usually not imported to Guatemala. They were imported exclusively for the project!

When talking about donors benefiting industries in their domestic economies, one of my informants talked about a project called T510, funded by USAID, which intended to improve water systems and incentivize competition among producers interested in exporting their watermelons and melons. He suggested that, although it was framed as a development intervention aiming to help small producers, the real purpose of the project was to sell the melons and watermelons to a grocery store in the US. He mentioned:

After sending 15 containers of melon and watermelon to the United States, after working for six months, beneficiaries ended up losing money. We had hired two foreign trade advisers, paid by USAID. We had agriculture engineers specialized in production, and we organized workshops to prepare all the U.S. requisites to import food. We also provided credits for water systems, but out of all the beneficiaries that were involved in the project, I did not meet a single one who made profit from it.

After hearing various cases of ‘slicing a cake piece of cake for themselves’, I asked

development practitioners whether there was something they could do about it. They mentioned that there was a lot of impunity regarding what politicians did with development funding, and international transparency procedures did not provide much hope either. One development worker I interviewed mentioned that the World Bank usually requires too many accountability measures and procedures “except in this case.” He said an NGO received \$11,000 to invest in tourism. Although the project produced some plans, maps, and routes at the beginning, they simply stopped investing the money the way they had promised. The development worker telling the story was interested in investing in tourism and took extra steps in finding out what had happened to the project. An employee from the World Bank told him that only 34% of the money had been spent in 4 years, and the project was about to be over in a few months. In the meantime, the NGO was ‘entertaining people with workshops’ but without making any real investment. One intended beneficiary of the project wanted to report the anomalies to the transparency unit of the World Bank in Washington, but it reneged on its promises to investigate and punish the NGO.

In short, I found that the resources practitioners have at their disposal have sometimes been contingent upon the benefits politicians or donors get from development projects. While development practitioners are required to account for every penny they spend, they have observed politicians using funding to attain political support and donors establishing spending requirements that benefit industries in their national economies. When politicians or donors help themselves to a slice of the development cake, they inhibit projects from challenging structural causes of food scarcity because communities’ needs are once again deprioritized. What is worse, such cases (even if they do not occur frequently) send messages about who may decide what to do with development resources and who is able to account for such decisions. As development

practitioners reinforce the idea that politicians and donors appropriate development resources, they become frustrated and discouraged to try new strategies for changing the structural causes of food scarcity.

UNDERSTANDING FUNDING ALLOCATION MECHANISMS OF THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY

The issue is that there is no easy way out. Real solutions are expensive and must be implemented in the long term – Development Practitioner

Funding fluctuation is probably the biggest obstacle development projects encounter for challenging structural causes of food scarcity in the Ch'orti' Maya area. To survive, development agencies must prioritize winning funding over beneficiaries' needs. In addition, competition for funding and beneficiaries pits local development agencies against each other and prevents them from collaborating or coordinating efforts. What is worse, funding is sometimes contingent on politicians or donors benefitting. Although development practitioners have attempted to provide solutions to food scarcity, development projects have only treated the symptoms –but not the causes– of structural violence in the Ch'orti' Maya area.

The case of the Ch'orti' Maya area suggests that allocating development resources through competitive bidding does not offer promising avenues for breaking structural cycles of food scarcity. In a context where agencies get funding through competitive bidding, donor allocation does not only determine which agency gets to implement which project; more funding availability expands the local service economy, while decreasing funding fosters competition among agencies. As a result, development practitioners prioritize institutional needs and the interests of politicians and donors over attending beneficiaries' needs. Indeed, the market-oriented allocation of resources, despite more accountability measures and transparency mechanisms, lacks mechanisms to promote long-term results, incentivize collaboration, or prevent donors' and politicians' interests to prevail.

That is not to say development projects would work perfectly if only resources were allocated in regards to population needs. On the contrary, even in ideal conditions, development

projects would continue to face a variety of challenges throughout implementation processes.

What I mean to say is that development practitioners find it next to impossible to prioritize communities' needs in the context of funding uncertainty. Similarly, although I acknowledge that practitioners have made efforts to propose more holistic, long-term solutions, I would not argue that all NGO directors or technicians know exactly how to break the cycle of structural violence in the Ch'orti' Maya area. In fact, some practitioners are better than others at assessing needs and adapting strategies accordingly. Rather, I discovered that the market-oriented allocation of development resources lacks mechanisms to promote long-term results and serves the interests of politicians and donors. Indeed, the market-oriented allocation of resources has produced shorter and narrower time horizons, as well as more but smaller projects in the Ch'orti' Maya area since the 1990s. Indeed, although there is increasing concentration of funding in larger NGOs, they are probably implementing more projects (as opposed to one single project). How is the current funding allocation mechanism different from previous contexts of development in the region?

New Allocation Mechanisms, New Challenges

Project proliferation in the Ch'orti' Maya area has consolidated a local network of development practitioners facing particular challenges due to funding insecurity. Just as the Cold War ideology and the Guatemalan Armed Conflict guided a top-down, large-scale approach to development from the 1940s to the 1980s, current development practices are also shaped largely by foreign donors, although with a more diverse set of issues in mind. Before funding gets to the Ch'orti' Maya area, and before local NGOs even apply for donor money, donors establish a set of filters that determine how development funding is allocated globally. For instance, the World Bank establishes income group thresholds and the OECD prioritizes 'aid orphan' countries.

Additionally, donor nations decide to allocate funding in regards to issues of human rights, peace, democracy, transparency, and, ultimately, economic stability. For instance, a variety of donors invested in development projects in Guatemala for as long as the peace process lasted, but many donors decided to divert funding to Africa to compete with attention from China in the mid 2000s. In short, donors sometimes allocate funding to areas of the greatest need, and sometimes they allocate funding based on other factors.

Whether donors realize it or not, deciding how to allocate funding for development greatly impacts networks of development in the local sphere. Beyond determining which agency will implement which project, donors foster the emergence of service economies when funding is abundant. In turn, they foster competition when funding decreases. Indeed, competition among agencies is a reflection of funding allocation patterns promoted by the global development industry. Though partnered countries share general goals, donors allocate funding according to independent criteria. Ultimately, international aid distribution is more competitive than complementary and coordinated.

Asymmetries among development partners also re-shape development practices. First, local stereotypes of indigeneity have changed as agencies have been dancing to the rhythm of ‘hot development topics’. Although discrimination against indigenous peoples has been part of Guatemalan history for centuries, development practitioners and other local actors have started adopting new perspectives about indigeneity from the global development industry. One traditional stereotype of indigeneity in Guatemala used to be that the abandonment of Ch’orti’ culture is a necessary step for transforming peasants into an educated and professional population (Metz 2008). In contrast, most development agencies today assume indigenous communities are naturally united and have a well-defined culture amenable to development. As

projects assume idyllic, harmonious, well-functioning indigenous communities, development practitioners often take for granted community unification and willingness to collaborate. They do not recognize that communities are extremely vulnerable and internally unequal (Metz, Mariano and López García 2010).

Second, the global development industry established very specific accounting methods for all expenses in their efforts to emphasize greater transparency. In the Ch'orti' Maya area, restrictions on project spending have affected development practitioners, especially those with lower positions such as technicians, because they spend much of their time accounting for every penny they spend. In turn, mayors accused of corruption by development workers do not seem to be affected, nor punished, by such mechanisms. The development industry would greatly benefit from adopting more effective transparency mechanisms that prevent politicians from benefitting from development funding, while streamlining accounting procedures for technicians.

Finally, fluctuating funding has fostered an unstable economy of development services in a region with no viable industrial base and very little tourism. The careers available at the high school and undergraduate level in Chiquimula are often related to development: agronomy, social work, and technical training in sustainable development. As a result, many local development workers have the same degree in the same discipline, and the means for differentiating their preparation and level of experience are blurry. In addition, while NGOs have found themselves unable to provide the same number of jobs they have provided in the past, local politicians sometimes offer more jobs than they need within governmental offices in order to attain political support, but no money to actually implement anything. Even though it is difficult to speculate whether unemployment will be an issue in the near future or not, decreasing funding certainly challenges the stability of the local economy of development services.

Implications for Literature

This research contributes to the body of literature aiming to document the proliferation of development projects in Guatemala. The case of the Ch'orti' Maya area is another example of how the expansion of the global development industry, neoliberal economic policies in Guatemala, and the Peace Process have fostered the proliferation of disconnected development projects since the 1990s. As scholars have found in Sololá (Rohloff, Kraemer Díaz and Dasgupta 2011) and Totonicapán (DeHart 2009), I found that NGOs rarely collaborate with one another and do not trigger long-term results in the Ch'orti' Maya area. Also, I found that the situation of abundance and multiplicity of projects of the 1990s has begun to change, because the current context of development is characterized by decreasing and fluctuating funding. Scholars may continue to study development and NGOs in Guatemala by asking what happens with local networks of development when funding dries up.

Second, this research contributes to the body of literature aiming to understand the inner workings of the global development industry. Like other ethnographers of aid, I found that agencies unevenly deliver project benefits to pad their portfolios. Chambers (2008) writes of 'the showpiece of rural development tourism', a "nicely groomed pet project or model village, specially staffed and supported, with well briefed members who know what to say and which is sited a reasonable but not excessive distance from the urban headquarters." In the Ch'orti' Maya area, development practitioners have identified particular beneficiaries who have in the past taken more advantage of projects than others. They sometimes deliberately invest more in such good bets in their attempts to produce cases of project success.

Ethnographers of aid have also found gaps between stated goals of development and actual implementation processes (Lewis and Moose 2006, Rossi 2004), and they have suggested

that the actual role of development policy is to legitimize development practice rather than to plan future interventions (Arvidson 2004). Mosse (2004) writes:

But what if development practice is not driven by policy? What if the things that make for good policy are quite different from those that make it implementable? What if the practices of development are in fact concealed rather than produced by policy? What if, instead of policy producing practice, practices produce policy, in the sense that actors in development devote their energies to maintaining coherent representations regardless of events?

Like Arvidson (2004) and Mosse (2004), I found that the incorporation of new approaches does not guarantee innovation of strategies in the Ch'orti' Maya area, because there is a disconnect between policy and practice. As a result, agencies sometimes replicate old recipes that do not work. Whereas development policies do not dictate practice, funding allocation mechanisms determine the structure (size, scope, and limitations) and priorities of development projects.

Finally, this research contributes to the body of literature aiming to understand patterns of structural violence. Ch'orti' people suffer structural violence because racism, ethnic discrimination, and social inequalities at the national and regional level have historically privileged others while placing them at a disadvantage. The global development industry does not provide the tools to engage in changing historical patterns of structural violence because the market-oriented allocation of resources imposes priorities on development practitioners (institutional needs, competition, and donors' and politicians' interests) that diverge from populations' needs. As a result, while Ch'orti' families receive benefits from development projects, they continue to suffer labor exploitation and state neglect. Although some cases of periodic chronic food shortages have received attention and some cases of premature death have been prevented, many positive initiatives have been discontinued when funding dries up.

On the other hand, the local network of development professionals shares the same racial

and ethnic differentiations that explain other inequalities in Guatemalan society, and reflects many contradictions and paradoxes of structural violence. While agencies have provided jobs for many people in the Ch'orti' region, few indigenous peoples have access to the training and networks that will lead them to hold a position in a local development agency. Most development practitioners are Ladinos, and some of them share the discriminatory ideas and attitudes other 'people from the town' have toward 'people from the aldeas'. Along the same lines, while indigenous peoples continue to lack true representation via COCODEs and have restricted access to political participation, mayors benefit from development funding before project beneficiaries do.

In short, development projects do not challenge structural violence in the Ch'orti' Maya area, and the local development network reflects some of the inequalities that explain structural violence in Guatemalan society. That is not to say development projects have made Ch'orti' people poor. On the contrary, Ch'orti' people have been suffering structural violence for centuries before the implementation of development projects in the region. What is more, environmental degradation, population growth, and labor exploitation also contribute to premature death, food shortages, and lack of political autonomy.

CONCLUSION

While there has been an entire anthropological industry devoted to deconstructing the development industry or making projects more effective, I have found no studies of how local development agencies and their personnel operate in relationship to each other, donors, and the intended beneficiaries. After analyzing such relationships, I found that the proliferation of disarticulated interventions in the Ch'orti' Maya area is a reflection of the market-oriented allocation of resources of the global development industry. Although current development interventions are less linked to geopolitical interests than a few decades ago, asymmetries among donors and recipients still create inequalities, lead to misunderstandings, and allow actors to pursue political and economic self-interests by manipulating development funding. Asymmetries among development partners explain why, despite practitioners' efforts to provide solutions to food scarcity, development projects have only treated the symptoms of food scarcity in the Ch'orti' Maya area. To survive, development practitioners must place the pursuit of funding over beneficiaries' needs. In addition, competition for funding and beneficiaries polarizes local development agencies, and prevents them from collaborating with each other or coordinating efforts. What is worse, resources development practitioners have at their disposal are sometimes contingent upon the benefits politicians or donors get from interventions.

As in most industries governed by market competition, in development 'you get what you pay for.' When donors select agencies or projects based solely on cost, they inhibit agencies from prioritizing local population needs. The global development industry needs to acknowledge the inequalities that occur throughout project implementation processes and come up with strategies to foster more long-term results. More importantly, in order to change structural causes of food scarcity, the global development industry should find mechanisms to prioritize

beneficiaries' needs. For instance, the development industry would greatly benefit from adopting more effective transparency mechanisms that prevent politicians from benefitting from development funding, while facilitating accountability procedures technicians engage in.

Finally, fluctuating funding has fostered an unstable economy of development services in a region with no viable industrial base and very little tourism. While NGOs have found themselves unable to provide the same amount of jobs they have provided in the past, local politicians sometimes offer more jobs than necessary for political patronage. Overall, development projects' inability to address structural causes of food scarcity reflects some of the multiple inequalities that shape structural violence in the Ch'orti' Maya area. While Ch'orti' families are increasingly subject to decisions made by international development agencies, local development workers have unstable resources at their disposal.

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